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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Brammertz Report,
Syria/Palestinians, Iraq, Lebanon (6/15)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported an address by Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Miqdad to the UN Security Council at a session about the latest Brammertz report. Miqdad confirmed Syrian cooperation with the UN investigation into the killing of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri. Dr. Miqdad said, "we have been informed about the content of Mr. Brammertz' report and believe that it is distinguished by its objectivity and professionalism, and that it contains positive signs about Syria's efforts to cooperate with the committee and about Syria's response to all demands of the committee." Miqdad added that the report includes a provisional description and explanation of the technical efforts of the committee, with respect to the crime scene and those related to its instruments. Miqdad said he hoped the investigation, with its new face, would lead to revelation of the truth about the crime. "In this respect, we reiterate what we have mentioned previously, that the most dangerous thing this investigation faces is the attempt of parties inside and outside our region to exploit the process to jump to conclusions that are not based on firm proof and evidence," Miqdad said.

Papers also reported that Vice-President Farouk Shara discussed with Farouk Qaddoumi, Secretary of the Fatah Movement, the latest developments in the Palestinian arena under mounting internal tension and foreign siege. Mr. Qaddoumi briefed Mr. Shara on the results of his meetings with the Palestinian leadership in Tunisia. The vice-President reiterated Syria's call for all the Palestinian factions to participate in a constructive national dialogue. In a press statement following his meeting with Shara, Mr. Qaddoumi said, "we discussed with Mr. Shara the Palestinian issue and the existing tension which has been exploited by Israel to escalate its aggression against the Palestinian people." He added that the steadfast Palestinian people inside the occupied Palestinian territories are discontented with the existing tensions between the two main Palestinian factions. The Palestinian official said: "We have to abandon everything that could disrupt inter-Palestinian relations."

All papers reported a statement by The Civil Association for Lost Syrians in Lebanon that listed the names of 377 Syrians who have been exposed to intentional damage by Lebanese security entities,

including assaults and arrests, noting at the same time to presence of 1079 lost Syrians in Lebanon. The association underlined that "some Syrian citizens have been exposed to physical and moral attacks by Lebanese security and some individuals, motivated by a few politicians, have turned their hate for Syria into a profession and have become instruments in the hands of foreign parties planning to spread chaos and instability in the Arab region." The statement urged the Lebanese government "to play its role to protect Syrians in Lebanon according to international law and norms." The association called upon the Lebanese government to help pursue this issue before the Lebanese judiciary, in order to punish perpetrators.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"The UN Security Council debates Brammertz report. Miqdad: Syria's cooperation arises from full interest in exposing the truth. Syria's support accords with standards of international criminal investigation and examination of false testimony" (Government-owned Tishreen 6/15)

"377 Syrians are exposed to physical and moral maltreatment in Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/15)

"In the wake of exposure of the Mossad network, Lebanese circles confirm: The failure of some Lebanese to regard Israel as an enemy paves the way for Mossad activities in Lebanon to prosper" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/15)

"Al-Shara discusses developments in the Palestinian arena with Farouk al-Qaddoumi: Syria supports a Palestinian national dialogue" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/15)

"Olmert is received with protest demonstrations in Paris. Hamas is ready for a long-term ceasefire on condition of full Israeli pullout" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/15)

"Al-Maliki unleashes a major security crackdown in Baghdad and expresses readiness to hold dialogue with insurgents. Bush ignores withdrawal and calls for 'an alliance for reconstruction'" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/15)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"No Place for Dispute"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (6/15): "We warn against the consequences of Palestinian rifts while Palestinians are suffering from siege and Israeli terrorism...."

"The current situation in the occupied Arab territories is delicate and sensitive.... Palestinians must consolidate their national unity and cohesion of their political work in cooperation with the elected government. This should be the top priority for the Palestinian people...."

"It is also important to exclude any contentious issue, such as the referendum, over which there is controversy, when there are many priorities on which all efforts must focus, such as ways to confront the siege, starvation, and Israeli incursions, and inform the world of the difficult situation and the conspiracy that seeks to uproot the Palestinians and torpedo the elements of their existence and the possibility of the establishment of an independent state...."

"A Visit to Contain the Defeat"

Jamal al-Zu'bi, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, commented (6/15): "US President George Bush made his unexpected visit to Baghdad hours after the end of his war council in Camp David. He wanted to salute his 'brave' soldiers, who are skilled at the killing of women and children in Hadithah, Al-Ishaqi, Ba'qubah, and Al-Fallujah. But faced with a growing number of civilian deaths resulting from war crimes committed by troops with low morale, and with the risk of the infamous invasion igniting a civil war in Iraq, Bush will not be able to remove the shame he has brought upon his troops. No visit can contain the damage. For these crimes cannot be seen as isolated acts by a number of corrupt individuals...."

"When the United States talks at great length about democracy and freedom in the world and claims to be concerned about them, it has in mind only one specific thing: the democracy that serves the interests of the United States and those who are loyal or subservient to it. But when it comes to any opposition force, it is acceptable, indeed essential, as far as the United States is concerned, to repress this force and violate its rights. The aim is to intimidate the world into accepting American hegemony...."

"Before and After 'The Dawn Surprise' Operation"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/15): "It was announced in Lebanon that a spy ring linked to the Israeli Mosad and involved in assassinations of Hizbollah

and Palestinian figures in the past few years has been uncovered. Lebanese Army intelligence has the right to feel proud of this achievement because, through the discovery of the network, it has proved its high competence and, more importantly, saved the Lebanese from potential acts of terrorism and sabotage.

"The discovery of the group came as a surprise to some who liked the game of hiding behind terrorist and criminal operations in Lebanon to harm Syria, tarnish its image, and make accusations against it.... It also came as a surprise to those who call for disarming the resistance and exposing Lebanon to Israeli aggression...."

"Israeli spy networks have operated in Lebanon for a long time.... The Israeli factor must not be ignored in all the crimes that have been committed, from the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri to this day...."

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